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New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43 (Parts I and II))

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/429)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.34)

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): The commitment and dedication of the Philippines to our children and to the promotion of child welfare and development, and the importance it attaches to this subject, find expression in our most fundamental law. Enshrined in our Constitution is a peremptory directed to the State to defend the rights of the child — from the right to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, to the right to special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development. This is a statement of Philippine law and policy that found further meaning upon our signing and prompt legislative ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

But, while we stand at the threshold of unprecedented global growth and technology-driven progress, we still face the tragic spectre of children going through indescribable suffering. In areas of conflict, children continue to be recruited and thrown into battle. Their fragile bodies have been held up to stop bullets. Millions of them have been killed, maimed or orphaned as a result of war and conflict. Those who have survived suffer deep psychological scars. Children continue to experience all kinds of abuse, from trafficking to the exploitation of their labour. This reality mirrors an image of complacency, neglect and heartlessness that does not say much for our efforts to provide care and protection and to improve their lives.

We took a step in the right direction when many of us signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The President of the Republic of the Philippines reaffirmed our commitment to the rights of the child when he signed these two Protocols during the Millennium Summit. The Philippines welcomes these Protocols, because they contain policies that our country has already adopted, including raising the minimum age for recruitment to military service to 18, as well as preventing participation in hostilities by individuals under the age of 18. In addition, we have criminalized violations of the rights of children in the context of the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography.

The Philippines believes that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children is an important opportunity to take stock of where we are in improving the lives of children and in building a better and brighter future for them. We will participate actively in the preparations,

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as well as in the follow-up conference itself. We hope that the outcome of the follow-up conference will not only provide policy directions but will also contain proposals for concrete actions to create a better world and offer our children a brighter future.

The Philippines would like to suggest that, in addition to what we already have before us, we should consider other elements to be included in the agenda of the follow-up conference in its preparatory meetings. First, we would like to include the issue of early childhood care and development. We believe that early childhood care and development provide children with a good start in life. The care that a child gets in his or her early years plays a critical role in the child's total development, as well as in his or her future well-being as an adult. We must also seriously consider the need to provide children with special protection. Special protection is a vital part of efforts to uphold the rights of children. Survival, development and participation are essential rights of children; however, these rights will not be exercised if children are not protected from abuse and exploitation.

We must also ensure, as we promote the rights of the child, that we hear the voice of the child. Children's participation in matters affecting them is increasingly becoming a trend in the area of their rights. When children become aware of the plight and problems of other children, they become part of the solution and not of the problem.

Mr. Pradhan (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Children are close to the hearts of each and every Filipino family and Philippine society. For their sake and the sake of all children in this world, let us all call on our leaders, who time and again say that today's children will be the leaders of the future, to sign and ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments that offer the promise of a better world for all children.

We must also welcome and support the many activities of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which bring relief, succour and hope to suffering children all over the world, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

Everything else that we achieve in this world will be less meaningful if we are unable to care for our children and for their future. We must renew our efforts and put a stop to all unconscionable acts of inhumanity and build a better and brighter world for our children.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the state of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Like many others, I am pleased to note that substantive preparations are under way at the national, regional and international levels. As can be seen from the report, the Preparatory Committee is successfully carrying out the important tasks assigned to it, in particular to prepare a draft outcome document for the special session.

The appeal made by world leaders at the 1990 World Summit for Children to give every child a better future resulted in the adoption of two major documents: the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation. The appeal was universally accepted, and relevant measures to implement it have been undertaken throughout the world.

Nevertheless, recent reports indicate that, despite those achievements, progress has been uneven in different regions and within different countries. Thus, the *Human Development Report 2000* states that today some 90 million children are out of school at the primary level and that more than 30,000 children die every day from mainly preventable causes. Therefore, there should be no doubt that both renewed commitment and definition of specific areas of future action are the major challenges for the next decade.

As we all enter the new millennium, we need to jointly identify the most effective ways of ensuring appropriate conditions for the protection and development of our children. The World Summit's goals need to be updated and its achievements sustained. Most importantly, the gap between children's legal rights and their actual rights in practice should be narrowed and eliminated. To ensure this, as was rightly pointed out at the Preparatory Committee's panel discussions, appropriate policy, budget and institutional reforms should be instituted in all countries. My delegation fully shares the view that the

future agenda for children to be adopted at the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly should be innovative, concise and action-oriented. For its part, Mongolia will continue its efforts to ensure the all-round development of children and to actively participate in and make its own contribution to this global endeavour.

Issues related to children, to their development and to the protection and promotion of the rights of children are of particular importance for my country, where children and youth constitute an overwhelming majority of the population. Over the past years, consistent efforts have been made by the Government of Mongolia to ensure broader access to health services and education for all children and to mobilize resources to fully implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals of the World Summit.

Much has been accomplished within the framework of the National Programme of Action for the Development of Children, adopted in 1993. In order to draw the attention and efforts of society to child-related issues, the National Summit on Child Protection and Development was organized in 1995. While 1995 was observed as the National Year for Children, 1996 was declared the National Year for Education and over 20 per cent of the national budget was allocated to education alone. In May 1996, the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child was adopted. As a result of the efforts of the Government, the mortality rates for infants and children under five have decreased by 3.5 times and 2.7 times, respectively, in terms of the number of related deaths between 1991 and 1997.

However, it should be recognized that further efforts and concerted actions are needed at the national level to reach the goals of the World Summit. As the country is still grappling with transitional difficulties, the growing number of street children and school drop-outs raises serious concern. Infant and under-five mortality are still high. Thus, according to figures from the National Statistical Office, in 1998 infant and under-five mortality rates were at 35.4 and 47.8 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Moreover, we have to deal with such newly emerging social ills as suicide, especially among adolescents, prostitution and alcohol and tobacco abuse in order to comprehensively address the complex issues facing children today.

The Labour Law sets the minimum working age and maximum working hours for all. Children under 16 are not permitted to work. Those under 18 are prohibited from doing arduous work and from working in dangerous areas such as mineshafts. However, according to a recent survey, child labour is becoming an issue that needs coherent state policy and control, an improved legal framework and concrete preventive actions on the part of the State. Among the most recent actions undertaken in this regard, I wish to single out the recent ratification by the Mongolian Parliament of International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

In its efforts to ensure a better life for future generations, the Government of Mongolia actively cooperates with international organizations, other Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Among these, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) plays an important role. The Fund is working in close cooperation with our national counterparts, other United Nations bodies – such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization – and NGOs to provide community-based services in primary health care, nutrition, basic education, child and family welfare, safe water and sanitation. Thus, the current 1997-2001 Mongolia-UNICEF Country Programme has 13 ongoing projects related to child health and nutrition. I am also pleased to underscore that the visit of UNICEF's Executive Director, Ms. Bellamy, to Mongolia last year was important in expanding further the cooperation with UNICEF. Shortly after her visit, a mid-term review of the Country Programme was undertaken. Its recommendations highlighted the importance of ensuring an integrated implementation of many ongoing programmes, projects for children and coherent interaction between various organizations that act on behalf and for children.

I wish to inform the Assembly that the year 2000 is being observed in Mongolia as the National Year for Child Development. It is a manifestation of Mongolia's strong political commitment to improving the situation of children. Within the framework of the Year, a national review of the progress achieved since the World Summit is being undertaken so as to map out specific recommendations for the future, including the elaboration of the next national programme of action for the development of children up to 2010. This

programme will be carried out in line with the global preparations for the special session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's support for the draft resolution submitted for our consideration and to reiterate its determination to actively participate both in the preparatory process and in the special session next year.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the state of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

On behalf of the Pakistan delegation, I would like to convey our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, for effectively leading the work of the Bureau and the Committee. We are confident that her personal commitment to the cause of children will make the General Assembly special session a singular success.

As one of the initiator countries for the World Summit for Children held in 1990, Pakistan has an abiding commitment to the effective realization of the goals of the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit. We believe that the special session in 2001 will provide us with an opportunity to galvanize political commitment to the implementation of the unfinished agenda of the Summit.

The World Summit for Children was instrumental in placing the issues of children in the centre of the development activities of the international community. The Plan of Action adopted by the Summit stipulated specific and quantifiable goals to be achieved within a decade. Despite the obvious shortfalls, progress towards the realization of these goals has been encouraging. In certain areas, significant strides have been made in achieving the targets of the World Summit for Children.

The near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been an important factor in the achievement of these goals. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has played a central role by supporting the efforts of Member States for the implementation of their plans of action. Other agencies and non-governmental organizations have also contributed to promoting the well-being of children. We would like to express our appreciation for their efforts in this regard.

Following the World Summit for Children, Pakistan formulated a national plan of action with goals for the year 2000. Considerable advances have been made in the realization of these goals and objectives. But further action is required in areas of better nutrition, basic education and education for the girl child.

The present Government is deeply committed not only to the realization of the goals of the Summit but also to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in its letter and spirit. The head of Government has also launched a national plan of action for the elimination of exploitative child labour. The juvenile justice system is being revamped in order to safeguard the rights and privileges of children.

Like Pakistan, many developing countries have launched major initiatives for the realization of the goals of the World Summit for Children. However, the pace of progress has been uneven. One of the major challenges facing us today is the need to eliminate deep disparities in the conditions and quality of life available to children of different regions of the world. In some of the countries of Africa, child mortality rates are one-third higher than those recorded at the beginning of the last decade. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia together account for three-fourths of all under-five deaths of children.

The goals for the development of children are deeply linked with the achievement of overall goals of development. It is widely acknowledged that progress in that area has been rather dismal. Despite the availability of unprecedented wealth in the global economy, more than 600 million children struggle to survive on less than one dollar a day. In almost 80 countries, per capita income is lower today than it was a decade ago.

Moreover, heavy external debt burden has seriously curtailed the ability of the developing countries to allocate sufficient resources to achieve the goals and objectives of the Summit. In the highly indebted poor countries (HIPCs), children are 10 times less likely to live up to the age of five than those in rich countries.

Reaching global goals for children was rendered even more difficult by declining levels of official development assistance (ODA). Without an alleviation of the debt burden and an increase in ODA, there is little likelihood that national policies can be fully implemented or that the goals of the Summit could be achieved anytime in the near future. We recognize the efforts being made to provide some relief to HIPCs. It seems, however, that only large-scale debt relief and debt cancellation would enable developing countries to allocate sufficient resources to the resolution of problems being faced by children. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to fulfil the 0.7 per cent of gross national product target for ODA. The negative effects of globalization, rising income disparities and increasing marginalization of developing countries should also be addressed by the special session.

A future agenda for children should include the unfinished agenda of the Summit. A good start in life has to be preceded by substantial reduction in child mortality rates. The goal of quality education has to be pursued in tandem with the objective of ensuring universal access to education. Opportunities for adolescents to fully realize their potentials need to be provided. But the critical role of parental guidance and family cannot be underestimated in the proper development of adolescents and children. In this context, cultural and social values must be respected.

We recognize the importance of building partnerships with non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors. The proposal to hold a special event or forum on the rights of the child deserves serious consideration. As far as the timing of the forum is concerned, it should be held at least three months prior to the special session. This would enable the Preparatory Committee to benefit from the proposals to be presented by the forum.

At the national level, we have established a national steering committee to coordinate national preparations for the special session, as well as for the national end-decade review. We hope that the national end-decade review report will be completed by the end of this year.

The present Government has also launched a major awareness-raising campaign regarding the United Nations General Assembly special session. A plan for the participation of children and youth in all national events is also being drawn up in consultation with the relevant organizations. A proposal for holding a meeting of experts from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries on the subject of the girl child during the first quarter of next year is also under serious consideration. Modalities for arranging this meeting are being explored with UNICEF.

Thorough preparations hold the key to the success of the special session. We thank the Government of Canada for hosting the International Conference on War-Affected Children last September and all other Governments that have arranged or plan to organize regional or global meetings in preparation for the General Assembly special session. Global and regional meetings would provide us with the necessary inputs required to identify the areas where further action is needed to implement the Plan of Action.

The biggest challenge however is to translate the documents adopted by these meetings into action. The success of the General Assembly special session will be measured by its impact on the revitalization of international efforts to promote the implementation of the Plan of Action. We urge the international community to build a new partnership to provide the necessary political will and impetus to save our children from the scourge of hunger, war, death, disease and exploitation. In a world of unprecedented prosperity, it is unconscionable that so many children are suffering so grievously. We should make every effort to save our children.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) *(spoke in French)*: The item we are discussing today, "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow up to the World Summit for Children", is of primary importance among matters of concern to the entire world.

By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 23 July 1990, my country showed how important this issue is for us and demonstrated its commitment to the cause of promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

In light of the Convention and the Plan of Action for the ten years from 1990 to 2000, Burkina Faso, in December 1991, adopted a national plan of action for children whose implementation, follow-up and assessment have all been entrusted to a national committee.

Furthermore, several other legislative measures have also been adopted always out of concern for better

ensuring the well-being of our children. For instance, the code relative to the person and the family, adopted in December 1989, set down as its main principle the equality of all children, whatever the origin of their birth. It also made obligatory registering the child at the registry office in the first two months of life, so that it has an identity in the eyes of the State. And, under the new criminal code, adopted in November 1996 and promulgated in December 1996, in addition to the old crimes against minors such as kidnapping or infanticide, certain traditional practices recognized as harmful, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are now also classified as crimes.

As far as implementation is concerned, a district for children has been built in Ouagadougou and the Burkina Faso educational system is experimenting more and more with satellite schools.

As can be seen, even though much has been done over these last few years to improve the legal and social status and situation of children, unfortunately it has to be said that there are many children in Burkina Faso who still face problems of health and malnutrition and who are not in school, all of which prevent them from developing their full potential. This presents real challenges and obstacles that seriously handicap our development.

Not only are there these negative effects, but to them must be added the incalculable consequences of AIDS, as well as the proliferation of armed conflicts, where children, the most vulnerable group, are the first victims.

In order to counter all these major obstacles and in order to implement the rights of the child, all countries, especially developing countries, should continue with their legal, political and economic reforms.

At the legal level, if they have not yet done so, it is important, as stated in the Millennium Declaration, that they should encourage the ratification and comprehensive implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as its optional protocols, which concern children in armed conflicts, trafficking in children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Politically and economically, policies and strategies for development must stress — possibly as their first priority — getting children into school and making sure that every child has at least a basic primary education. At the moment, it is estimated that some 100 million children in the world are not in school. This is intolerable and it is hard to understand, as we stand on the threshold of a new Millennium. This situation must be corrected quickly in the years to come, if we are to avoid a widespread social cataclysm.

It is high time for us to stop thinking of education as something sterile or non-productive; we must recognize it as a real investment. The quality of our human resources is the essential factor on which all development is predicated and these human resources are the product of our educational system. That is why we must be aware of the need and the urgency for directing financial resources to education — something to which our development partners must agree.

In this respect we must recognize the positive contribution that certain countries have made — those of the European Union, the Nordic countries and Canada — together with certain international organizations, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in its concern for the well-being of children, particularly in Africa. These efforts are greatly appreciated by all who benefit from them. I have only to mention the countries which have faced wars — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, among others — for it to be seen how much UNICEF has done to provide humanitarian aid for children. In certain natural disasters — such as in Mozambique or Madagascar last year — once again UNICEF went in and reopened the schools.

The World Food Programme has also provided various vital operational activities such as, for instance, providing $37 million to promote basic education in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Food Programme is now helping 15 African countries to improve the rates of schooling.

Burkina Faso hopes that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, which will take place in 2001, will take very important decisions to support children in the form of a plan of action for the coming ten years. Let us make sure that these decisions are adequate to face the many challenges that stand before the international community in this area of our activities.

May I take this opportunity to thank in advance the Preparatory Committee, as well as UNICEF, for their support to many regional activities which form part of the preparation for the special session and for all the coordinating and implementing work they have done to provide information on the progress of the preparatory process.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): The World Summit for Children was a turning point in the history of social development and indeed, by all accounts, a landmark event. Not only did that meeting set substantial comprehensive targets in the field of child health and welfare, but, unlike so many other development ventures by the international community, those targets were being realized. Child mortality was being reduced, along with the needless suffering caused by disease that could be, and was, prevented.

The World Summit for Children was of critical importance in several respects, not least of which was the focused attention it brought, and has sustained, to the development needs of children and the moral responsibility of the international community to meet those needs. Our continued appreciation is extended to the six initiating Governments for the vision they displayed in calling for the Summit.

In the intervening years since the World Summit for Children was convened, the world has truly undergone change and made advances that were largely unforeseen. Globalization has come to provide the context for much of international relations, democracy has taken root in many countries and advances in information technology have further reduced the barriers between nations and peoples. Indeed, for some countries the past decade has been one of untold prosperity and progress. Yet some realities have not changed and remain as prevalent today as ever. Children are still the most vulnerable members of society, and they demand our protection, nurturing and support. Poverty remains the greatest challenge we face as we seek to enhance the development, welfare and protection of children throughout the world. If I may recall the words of Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in his address to the Summit,

> "Hunger, disease, illiteracy, despair — these constitute the enemy's fearful train." (*SG/SM/4496*)

How relevant these words remain today.

As we prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, we will renew our commitments and have occasion to consider future actions for children over the next 10 years. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/55/429, on the state of the preparations being made towards convening that session. In that regard, allow me also to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, and to all members of the Preparatory Committee for their tireless efforts.

Indonesia supports the work being undertaken by the Preparatory Committee in its preparation of a draft outcome document for the special session, and we are confident that the operational strategies will further advance the situation of children and result in practical and measurable results. Indonesia further agrees that the future agenda for children should be guided by the need to be innovative, concise and action-oriented, with a view to achieving a positive impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged.

Furthermore, in crafting the outcome document, we should also be aware of the many other targets that have been set as follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Conference, the Millennium Summit and other international conferences. Targets have been set for poverty eradication, education, food security and in other fields, and these should be reflected and supported in the forthcoming special session. In this connection, we would agree with the statement in the Secretary-General's report on this item that more emphasis should be placed on combating diseases that take a high toll on children.

In approaching the special session, my delegation would like to recall the fact that child mortality rates remain unacceptably high and that more needs to be done in addressing malnutrition, maternal mortality and basic education. There is clearly a need for increased intervention in these areas by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Governments. Let us also recall that enhanced children's health and nutrition is a primary duty and a task for which solutions, we believe, are now within reach.

Let me also comment on the progress that has been made and that has already made a great change in

the lives of so many. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has now achieved near universal acceptance, which shows the importance that the international community attaches to the welfare and interests of children. Likewise, the adoption of the two Optional Protocols shows the growing commitment to all aspects of child safety. The special session will afford yet another opportunity for us to assess the positive impact of the Convention.

In the years immediately following the World Summit for Children, Indonesia made considerable progress in implementing the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. We had registered significant achievements in child immunization and the provision of clean water and improved sanitation, and, importantly, the poverty rate in Indonesia had been reduced and was continuing to drop. Now, as we approach the 10-year anniversary of that Summit, an economic crisis has all but eliminated much of the progress that was achieved and has had a broad effect on the welfare of children in Indonesia.

This situation has gravely affected the Government's efforts to meet the goals set at the World Summit for Children and will certainly have an impact on the achievement of future goals. I will say, however, that political reformation has brought renewed hope for the protection and development of children, and the Government maintains a strong commitment to doing what it can with what it has.

In that regard, Indonesia is implementing programmes to tackle those situations that can be characterized as emergencies through its social safety net. Nevertheless, we are not in a position to undertake all that needs to be done, and international assistance, in particular from UNICEF, is very important if we are to strengthen our national capacity to fulfil the Summit goals and those of the special session. The Government of Indonesia will continue to work within its means to meet its solemn obligations and, where possible, to support the efforts of the international community.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): At its fifty-fourth session the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/93, of 7 December 1999, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children". This resolution scheduled the special session for September 2001 and, among other things, established an open-ended Preparatory Committee for the special session.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that, in keeping with the provisions of the resolution, the Preparatory Committee has since commenced its work, convening an organizational session from 7-8 February 2000 and a substantive session from 30 May to 2 June 2000.

My delegation also notes the decisions adopted at the end of the first substantive session, which, among other things, address the following: holding two more substantive sessions in 2001 to enable the Committee to provide more input into the preparatory process; the participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process; and convening the special session in the month of September 2001. These are all important decisions which, in the view of the Nigerian delegation, would greatly facilitate the convening of the special session.

We therefore commend the Preparatory Committee for the excellent work it has done so far. We trust that Member States will continue to actively participate in the work of the Committee as it proceeds with the implementation of the remaining portion of its programme of work. In that connection, we pay tribute to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, the entire staff of the Organization, and other United Nations agencies for their excellent role in the ongoing preparations aimed at ensuring the success of the special session. We urge them not to relent in those efforts.

The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session gave Member States a good opportunity to reaffirm their resolve to accord foremost priority to children's rights, as agreed during the World Summit for Children in 1990. It also presented Member States with the opportunity to formulate future actions for children that are based on the commitments made by world leaders during the World Summit. Undoubtedly, new issues concerning children are emerging in the new century, issues that were not envisaged 10 years ago.

The major challenges that have emerged and continue to impinge on the rights and welfare of children include the deepening of poverty and inequality; the proliferation of conflicts and the consequent spread of violence; the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the persistence of discrimination, particularly against the girl child. A

total of 3.8 million children are said to have died of AIDS, while 13 million more children have been orphaned by the disease — and the number may reach 40 million before the end of the decade. The disease is devastating to families and is tearing apart the very fabric of society. It strikes the most productive age group, disrupting vital sectors of the economy. There is no doubt whatsoever that robust and effective action will be required at the national, regional and international levels to deal with these issues, if the aims and objectives of the Declaration adopted in 1990 are to be fully realized.

Children in developing countries are the worst hit by the challenges posed by the issues that have emerged since the World Summit for Children in 1990. In that connection, the call by resolution 45/217, of 21 December 1990, for international solidarity in support of developing countries in their pursuit of the goals of the World Summit, needs to be fully implemented by Member States.

One vital area that the special session needs to address is the issue of children and armed conflict. It is reassuring that the Security Council is seized with the problems arising from children in armed conflict. We believe, however, that the international community needs to be more forceful in bringing to justice all those who commit war crimes, particularly against children, which would no doubt serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators of those heinous crimes. It is equally important to address the issue of trafficking in children for the purposes of slavery and prostitution. Measures should be adopted at international, regional and national levels to deter traffickers by ensuring that penalties reflect the gravity of the offence.

Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the major challenges, developing countries have made some remarkable progress with regard to the situation of the world's children. In 1992 Nigeria adopted a national plan of action in pursuit of the goals of the World Summit. Among other things, the national plan of action is aimed at evolving new initiatives in the areas of health, nutrition, water, environmental sanitation and education. The plan of action has since become the blueprint for collaboration with the United Nations and some of its specialized agencies, such as UNICEF.

Over the years, successive Nigerian Governments have also taken bold steps towards further implementation of the goals of the World Summit. Those steps include reinvigoration of the social sector through a number of women- and children-specific programmes and projects; hosting a world conference on the Roll Back Malaria Initiative — concerning a disease which is responsible every year for the death of numerous children — especially in Africa; adoption of a robust poverty alleviation programme; active promotion of gender equality and positive gender relations; establishment of national and State-level task forces on the girl child; and a commitment to the eradication of polio.

Those efforts are not exhaustive. They are complemented by the actions taken since Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1991. Those actions include the establishment of recognized institutional mechanisms and a framework for articulating children's issues; the establishment of national and State child-rights implementation and monitoring committees; the articulation of a legal framework for the protection of children; relaunching the national programme on immunization nation-wide; the harnessing of the potential of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the community; and the signing of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely, that on the involvement of children in armed conflict and that on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The present Administration has also recently launched the universal basic education and national rebirth programme, designed to improve the lives of Nigerian children and orient them to nation-building and development.

In addition to assessing the achievements of the goals of the Declaration adopted by world leaders in 1990, the special session will, my delegation believes, afford us all an opportunity to tackle the unfinished business pertaining to the world's children. It will also enable us to address the lessons that have emerged in the last decade. It should be recalled that heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit in September agreed that by 2015 boys and girls alike should be able to complete primary school and should have equal access to all levels of education. They also resolved to reduce, by the same date, maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five mortality by two thirds.

The special session should therefore be aimed at setting bold objectives, updating targets and renewing

strategies to guide international cooperation and country-level action in regard to children. It is our hope that the outcome document will contain a political declaration reaffirming the commitments made during the World Summit for Children. The declaration should be concise and action-oriented. The document should reflect the progress achieved so far on child survival, protection and development. It should also address the obstacles that have militated against the full realization of the goals of the World Summit at the national, regional and international levels. Above all, the special session must lead to enhanced mobilization of resources — human, financial and technological — for child development, and should call on relevant players, including Member States, international organizations, international financial institutions and NGOs, to actively contribute towards the implementation of identifiable goals.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Ten years ago, the leaders of the world came together at the World Summit for Children and jointly committed themselves to giving every child a better future. Now, as we set out on the follow-up of the Summit, we remember Jim Grant, the conceiver and architect of what was a pioneering global summit for the United Nations system. His vision and masterful advocacy were instrumental in many of the meaningful programmes of the last decade.

Definite progress was made over the past 10 years. Millions of lives were saved; many afflictions were reduced; more children were put to school, often for a longer period of learning; and many children had better opportunities to fulfil their potential. We in Bangladesh have made every effort to keep our promises to children, thus improving their lives in most areas. We have also joined forerunner countries in ratifying the two recent Optional Protocols relating to children.

The World Summit for Children gave rise to a global movement that led to the world's most ratified human rights instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its vision is based on the firm conviction that the best interests of children should always come first. It provides the tools to promote the rights of children worldwide, along with improving their survival, protection and development.

Much progress has been achieved in practice and in principle. But still, the goals agreed upon at the 1990 Summit remain largely unattained. There are numerous challenges looming before us, many of them quite formidable. The number of people living in poverty, half of whom aria children, is now greater than ever before. A fifth of the entire global population lives on less than a dollar a day. Poverty deprives the ability of parents and families to provide children with a setting where they can grow up in a safe, sound, secure and stable environment. The lives of countless children are blighted by crushing poverty; their potential is nipped in the bud by lack of opportunities; their rights remain unrealized owing to gross deprivation.

The spread of many deadly diseases continues unabated. Malnutrition is growing. Armed conflict and political instability are proliferating. Violence against children is being carried out with impunity. Child labour, in different degrees and all over the world, still defies control. Those are all challenges that we must confront with a resolute determination to overcome them. Incidentally, next year, when the special session will be held, is also the beginning of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, covering the period 2001 to 2010.

We have new opportunities and new tools to fight many of these challenges. We have the resources to put an end to much of this misery. We have the capacity to overcome most of these hurdles. We have new technologies to fight many diseases and afflictions. We have the know-how to ensure that the rights of children are protected.

The new approaches to development gained from increased understanding during the last decade have reinforced the conviction that efforts at ending poverty and exclusion must be guided by the values and principles of human rights and the rights of the child. In that context, I would like to emphasize that special attention should be accorded the needs of the girl child. A rights-based approach to development is the one to follow. The information and communication revolution has opened up new avenues for people to participate in development and in the protection of their rights.

We now have the normative framework to address the challenges comprehensively. But the singular challenge before us is to mobilize the political commitment of our leaders to invest in our common future. We need, through practical and concerted actions, to reach the goals and targets that we have set

for ourselves. Many goals and targets relevant to children were endorsed by the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s. There is international consensus on goals designed to reduce infant and under-five mortality and child malnutrition, to improve education and adult literacy, to achieve gender equality, to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and to protect children from HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, child labour, sexual exploitation and abuse. Those aims remain the cornerstone for our action to realize the rights of all children and adolescents.

We need to adopt a set of practical and convincing strategies for attaining the goals in their projected time-frames. We will need to forge new partnerships with civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and children themselves. Family and community participation must be promoted.

We will need to work to reduce disparities within and among societies. We will need to ensure that laws exist and to strengthen them so that the rights of children are protected. We will need to improve the effectiveness of the mechanisms to monitor child rights. Partnerships should be strengthened with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations around shared concerns of child rights and women's rights. Their active participation in the special session and their involvement in the preparatory process can only add value to intergovernmental efforts. All multilateral and bilateral development agencies should contribute to the attainment of the various goals and targets. The United Nations Children's Fund, as the lead agency most involved with issues related to children, has a special role in the coordination, follow-up, monitoring and review of the whole process.

Adequate resources must be made available to translate the principal obligations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child into practical reality. Legal, administrative, economic and social measures must be undertaken to allocate available resources to ensure the realization of child rights and to monitor the progress achieved.

In September next year we will have a special session of the General Assembly for follow-up of the 1990 World Summit for Children. We believe that many of the issues I touched upon today should be addressed forcefully in discussions relating to the special session.

We applaud in particular Ambassador Patricia Durrant's able leadership and guidance in her role as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee of the special session on children. As a member of the Bureau, it has been my privilege to work closely with her during the preparatory process. We look forward to working closely and constructively with other delegations for a focused and action-oriented outcome of the special session.

We joined in sponsoring the draft resolution on this item because of our total and continuing commitment to the cause of children. We hope that the draft resolution will receive the widest possible support of the Assembly, through adoption by consensus.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): South Africa supports and welcomes the introduction and proposed adoption of draft resolution A/55/L.34, relating to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, and entitled "Preparations for the special session on children".

Considering the time constraints — the special session on children is a mere nine months away — my delegation believes we must carry out the preparatory process in the most efficient and inclusive manner. South Africa will do its utmost to ensure the success of the special session.

It might be asked what is so special about the General Assembly session for the follow-up on the World Summit for Children, to be held in September 2001. First, we must go back to the 1990 World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, and recall its goals. At the same time, we will have to review and evaluate whether we achieved the goals of the World Summit for Children, particularly the Declaration's appeal to give every child a better future.

Secondly, as Member States we will have to factor in the Millennium Summit Declaration, which calls for increased development for and protection of children. Thirdly, the special session will present an extraordinary opportunity for government leaders, non-governmental organizations, children's advocates and youth and child representatives themselves to hold a dialogue and agree on new emerging issues and commit themselves to changing the way the world views and treats children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, laid the foundation for the implementation of policies and programmes for every person under 18 years of age. However, its universal ratification has not been translated into universal application. Reports submitted by the Secretary-General, the United Nations Children's Fund and related agencies since the World Summit for Children in 1990, bear testimony to the fact that children's rights are not always guaranteed and protected. In all countries, in every region, our Governments have been working extensively to ensure that children are protected from all forms of exploitation. Yet, in many parts of the world, some children still do not enjoy fundamental freedoms and inherent rights, such as family care and protection; basic nutrition and education; basic health and social services; protection from armed conflict; and protection from abusive practices.

From a regional perspective, the regeneration of Africa — the African renaissance — seeks, among other objectives, to reassert our children's rightful place in the spectrum of global diversity. Their dignity and self-worth must be fully restored. The promotion and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is a region-specific tool for us in this regard.

Education and achievement, with an emphasis on gender equity, particularly for the girl child, is another key to future human development. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, adopted a Framework for Action, committing Governments to achieving quality basic education for all. Particular emphasis was placed on girls' education, and donor countries and institutions gave a pledge that no country seriously committed to basic education will be prevented from achieving that goal as a result of a lack of resources. While recognizing that there has been significant progress in many countries, it is not acceptable that more than 113 million children, most of them girls, have no access to primary education. Gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems, and the quality of learning falls short of the needs of societies.

South Africa takes seriously the education of its children as one of the primary goals of development. As such, with the advent of democracy in 1994, a number of initiatives were undertaken by my Government to address challenges inherited from the previous regime. A national education framework supported by constitutional imperatives was set up to ensure that South Africa, in its quest to educate is citizens, would never resort to a system of education that discriminated against its citizens.

My delegation would like to suggest to the Assembly that the agenda for the special session focus on, among other issues, the need for immediate action to confront the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on children. The containment of HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening infectious diseases must be confronted in partnership with the rest of the world. We have to recognize and deal with its devastating effects in destroying many lives and making orphans of millions of children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the pandemic's potential threat to all of humanity. The lack of affordable medical intervention should be addressed with urgency; so should efforts aimed at lessening the risk factors associated with mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, we should address the challenge of globalization and how it affects the ability of countries to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children and the objectives of the special session on children. Creative ways have to be explored on how globalization can be harnessed to accelerate progress for children. The revolution in information and communication technology and the so-called digital divide have both positive and negative implications for children. The challenge is how to direct information technology's potential for good and how to ensure that the digital divide can be overcome to benefit developing countries. In particular, we must consider how children can use information technology in order to empower and uplift them in their daily lives and to prevent their marginalization from the rest of the world.

Other measures, such as the significant reduction in external debt, particularly in Africa, and the need to focus aid flows on the neediest economies, must be part of international action to support initiatives aimed at improving the status of children.

More resources and actions are needed to fight poverty and to provide access to basic services for all. At the national level, countries should allocate a higher proportion of their national budgets to basic social services, which benefit children, and greater efforts should be made to reduce child labour. South Africa

supports initiatives aimed at reducing and ultimately abolishing child labour. We ask the International Labour Organization (ILO) to continue its work aimed at eradicating the use of children in forced labour, for which they are easy prey. In this regard, my delegation can report that South Africa has been singled out by the ILO for its high-calibre investigation into child labour. The survey found that the worst forms of child labour were not common in South Africa. My Government will continue to enforce a zero-tolerance approach to child labour where it still exist in the country, especially on commercial farms.

Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure the social well-being of children and provide basic social services for children. The role of parents and family structures are critical, as is the increased collaboration of the private sector as part of their corporate social responsibility. Existing partnerships with non-governmental organizations and civil society should be enhanced.

One method of improving children's lives would be the expeditious ratification and full implementation by Member States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Another method is commitment at the highest political level to improve the lives of children at the national, regional and international levels. From a national perspective, South Africa has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations and submitted its national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Our Constitution, furthermore, states that

> "a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child".

Other areas which need evaluation, and which should remain priorities, are children's access to basic health services, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and proper nutrition. The issue of exclusion and equal rights for all marginalized children who suffered from racial discrimination also needs attention, as does the need to alleviate the plight of refugee children and children affected by natural disasters.

The draft resolution recognizes the importance of the participation and active contribution of children and youth, at all stages of their life cycle and in accordance with their evolving capacity, to the debate during our preparations and during the special session on children. My delegation believes this goal needs to be promoted.

It is our hope that the outcome documents and final agenda for children to be adopted by the special session will enjoy the consensus of all Member States. We hope that the final results will have universal relevance in addressing the situation of children in the industrialized and developing countries. They must emphasize the development of the whole child and the universality of child rights.

By investing in the life cycle of children we can change the course of human development. We should allow children to seize the right opportunities at the right moment, and resolve that our children will be the responsible leaders of tomorrow.

My delegation commends the mission of the United Nations Children's Fund to protect children's rights and to help meet their needs. Similarly, the work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is highly appreciated.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that we must re-energize our commitment to realize a global vision for children. Let us also resolve to do what Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel did: to be at the service of the children of the world.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very pleased to speak on behalf of Chile regarding the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

Chile's commitment to children and infants has found expression in efforts to decrease poverty, improve equity and increase access to opportunities through the school food programme, focus on preschooling in general and in particular for ethnic minorities, programmes to provide scholarships to children, school health programmes and so forth. One of the first measures adopted after Chile returned to democracy was the national law regarding the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 14 August 1990. This Convention constitutes a new ethical and legal framework which involves the State, social policies, boys and girls and their families, ranging from consideration of the needs of children to a doctrine of comprehensive protection

which considers children as individuals with full rights. Chile's commitment was demonstrated by its participation in the World Summit for Children, at which it undertook the task of drafting a national plan for children.

The actions of the Chilean State have focused on three central themes. The first is the refinement of existing sectoral social policies and the development of new programmes. The second is the gradual adaptation of national laws to bring them into line with the principles of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child and the creation of laws relating to children and adolescents. The third is the implementation of planning instruments for specific public policies and programmes for children.

The social policies affecting children have principally focused on education, health and justice. Education has been considered a key component for overcoming poverty and social vulnerability, and therefore resources have been mobilized to improve the quality of education through a fundamental reform of the Chilean education system — in methods of teaching and learning, time spent in the classroom and the contents of education, as well as the gradual and sustained improvement of the capacities and working conditions of teachers. This qualitative transformation of the education system will lead to substantial improvements in the education available to boys and girls in our country.

Prevention has been the priority for the activities focused on infants and adolescents by the Chilean health sector, and greater emphasis has been placed on monitoring the biological, psychological and social growth and development of boys and girls, so as to guarantee them a better quality of life. As an example of the progress achieved, more than 99 per cent of the children in Chile are born in maternity wards and receive professional care.

Similarly, in the justice sector there is a movement to reform the laws regarding families and minors, as well as to develop measures within the framework of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. These measures include the paternity law, which eliminates all forms of discrimination against children.

We must also stress the organization at the national level of the inter-ministerial working group on children and adolescents, which has the task of drafting a national policy for children and adolescents, as part of a comprehensive plan of action for boys, girls and adolescents for 2001-2010, with some specific objectives to be evaluated and possibly achieved in 2005. Furthermore, we must mention the creation of a set of committees with specific thematic objectives: child labour, breast-feeding, preventing child abuse, preschool education and preventing drug addiction.

The following were among the principal milestones for children during the past decade. Certainly, the first was the participation by Chile — represented by the President of the Republic, Mr. Patricio Aylwin — in the World Summit for Children, held in September 1990 in New York, and Chile's ratification in the same year of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. The second was the elaboration, in 1992, of the national plan for children, the theme of which was goals and lines of action for children, commitment to the children of Chile. The third was the promulgation of laws that directly benefit children. Notable among them were the law on the adoption of minors, the law on family violence and the laws that authorize leave for parents of a sick child under one year old or a seriously ill child between one and 18 years old. Finally, there were public policies aimed at boys and girls below six years of age from low-income families, with special emphasis on the activities of the national kindergartens board to respond to the various special educational needs of children under six.

Locally, we have also developed policies and actions for improving the quality of life of children in Chile. Since 1994, the municipalities have elaborated local children's plans. Their implementation comes under the "Network of Municipalities that Defend Children", which since 1994 has comprised approximately 100 municipalities.

Lastly, at the international level, in 1996 Chile hosted a regional meeting, with the participation of more than 30 Ministers from the social sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, to evaluate progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I must underscore that, with a view to implementing the Convention, in 1993 we produced the first report on measures adopted by Chile to give effect to the rights recognized in the Convention. In November 1998, we drew up a second report, and

recently Chile finished the end-of-decade report on the achievement of the goals of the Lima Accord and the World Summit for Children.

Even though Chile's progress in fulfilling its commitment made at the World Summit for Children is significant, our country has a long road to travel to build a society where no children are deprived of school or health attention because of lack of means. Nevertheless, inspired by the commitments of the Summit, as well as by regional and Ibero-American agreements, Chile will make every effort to achieve the target of making our nation's children the priority sector of our social policies.

The promotion of children's interests at the international level received its first great stimulus in the World Summit for Children, the first global conference of the set of United Nations summits on economic and social affairs in the 1990s. I would mention in particular the World Social Summit, which also advanced the rights of children, particularly with regard to education and health.

At a time when we are closing the circle of the five-year review of the implementation of agreements and commitments undertaken at all those Conferences, my country has further undertaken to make every possible effort for the success of the special session of the General Assembly to review implementation of the agreements of the World Summit for Children. We express our full support for Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, whose chairmanship of the Preparatory Committee guarantees the success of this important session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The commitment of the United Nations Children's Fund, particularly its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, is also highly appreciated by the Government of my country.

Mrs. Al-Hajjaji (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The international community looks forward to September 2001 in order to participate effectively in the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. On this occasion, my country's delegation thanks the Secretary-General for the efforts to employ the indicators set up to measure the progress achieved in implementation of the recommendations of the Summit and the Plan of Action. We urge the Secretariat to continue gathering and analysing data to reinforce national capacities. We also thank the Secretariat for its useful report.

My delegation also thanks the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the essential role that it has played as coordinator of the follow-up, and the Preparatory Committee for the remarkable efforts made for the colloquiums that have been held. The Libyan delegation is eagerly waiting to participate effectively in the two substantive sessions to be held in 2001.

In order to participate in the preparation for this special session, my delegation would like to draw attention to the following points, which we believe must be assigned a priority when discussing the rights, protection and well being of children.

First, we urge States to create free, high quality non-discriminatory education in primary schools in order to help children create and develop their personalities. In this way, their education will not consist exclusively of filling up their heads with old information.

Secondly, education is a solid foundation for breaking the evil of poverty. The struggle against poverty demands adequate resources and effective use of available resources to ensure the provision of health, social and educational services to children and families alike. We fully understand the importance of international cooperation and the need for the industrialized States to respect their commitments regarding official development assistance (ODA), the debt burden and debt servicing relief for the least developed countries in particular.

Thirdly, my delegation does not believe that the results of globalization are always negative in all circumstances, areas and in most countries, because, despite its negative consequences for the most vulnerable sectors, including children, we too can benefit from the enormous advances in technology, information and communications, if we employ them in the service of economic growth and social development, especially in the developing countries.

Fourthly, despite all the important advances we have made for children, which were enshrined in 1989, and despite the international ratification of the Convention, we still, as a community, have a long road to travel to fill the immense gap between the rights of children on the one hand and laws and real practice on the other.

Fifthly, we cannot talk about the Convention on the Rights of the Child without welcoming the adoption of the two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. There are those who have exploited the innocence of children and profited by exploiting them shamelessly. The report reveals that some have even killed children and foetuses for the commercial use of their organs.

When we speak of the rights, protection and well-being of children, we must also speak of the rights of women because discrimination against women, the violation of their rights and their exclusion and marginalization will invariably have an impact on children. Therefore, we must create an appropriate family environment that will promote the development and well-being of children. My country's delegation is convinced that the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies for children and women will remain unfinished and will fall short of our hopes if we fail to muster political will at the highest levels and strictly to respect those rights at the level of our political leadership. We must be certain that investments in these sectors are investments for all society, and not useless expenses.

The increasing use of drugs among children and youth is a phenomenon plaguing most countries of the world, rich and poor alike.

It is truly deplorable that, in certain armed conflicts, the use of children as soldiers is widespread. These children are abused, tortured and raped in order to force them to obey orders.

My delegation insists on the need for health care for children and mothers, including vaccination campaigns against contagious diseases. The countries of Africa, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa, are suffering shocking increases in the incidence of HIV/AIDS and its consequences, which are further proof of the need to educate children and youth about the transmission of the disease and prophylaxis.

During the second half of the past decade, the international community assigned high priority to the subject of violence against women. It must now assign the same priority to the question of violence against children, including violence and sexual abuse within the family; the assassination of homeless children by law enforcement officers in certain countries; the torture of children in places of detention; the murder of children in civil wars and armed conflicts; and violence against and abuse of refugee, immigrant, poor, handicapped, homeless and other children. These are all extremely serious problems that we must address.

We believe that gender equality is just as important as the points I have already raised. My delegation is convinced that we cannot trust national laws that merely denounce such inequality. We must adopt indicators to measure the progress achieved.

Handicapped children suffer discrimination and violation of their rights at all phases of their lives, particularly if the handicap is accompanied by discrimination on the basis of colour, race, social origin or belonging to an ethnic or religious minority in any given society. My delegation expects a great deal from the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in South Africa next year. My delegation awaits with equal eagerness the conference to be held in Madrid next year on the importance of education in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination.

The resolutions of United Nations human rights agencies and the statements issued by agencies entrusted with the follow-up to the implementation of human rights instruments all insist on the inhumane and destructive impact of international sanctions imposed on certain countries. The international community acknowledges and insists on the fact that children are the most helpless sector of our societies. We must therefore reflect upon and assess the impact of sanctions on the health, education, nutrition, psychology, upbringing and morals of children. My delegation hopes that the Preparatory Committee will, at its future meetings, assign the necessary priority to these issues.

My country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in April 1993. We have submitted two reports to date. The first was considered by the Committee, which made its own remarks and recommendations; the second, the periodic report, has yet to be debated. My country has also adopted International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The competent authorities of my country are currently considering the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a view to signing and ratifying them in the future.

All our activities to promote the well-being and to protect the rights of children are the responsibility of an independent organization, the High Committee for Children, that enjoys the highest support and unlimited competency. In the discharge of its duties, the Committee works and cooperates with the agencies of civil society, non-governmental organizations and local community bodies in charge of orphans, handicapped, poor and addicted children and others.

My country has prepared a document entitled "The Rights and Duties of Women in Libya". This document was presented to and adopted by the Libyan Parliament in 1998. It enshrines the rights of mothers to raise their children in the family home; it also enshrines the rights of children to obtain Libyan nationality even when one parent is not a Libyan citizen.

The long-term policy adopted in my country is intended to allow for the development of healthy children through prenatal medical tests and the provision of all the nutritional needs of children. There is also work to detect congenital deformities, as well as vaccination campaigns. We have centres for social care in urban areas, and we are attempting to ensure the same services through itinerant services for the rural population sector.

These measures are intended to provide all the elements necessary for social education within the framework of educational organizations, associations and institutions for children in order to develop their skills and capacity for creativity. This policy is also aimed at relying less and less on police agencies to deal with infractions by children.

We insist that this problem be addressed within the family and by social workers. Furthermore, our long-term policy is aimed at creating juvenile courts and police. Specialized courts, social workers and psychologists would play an important role in this matter. We are also amending laws that govern work by women to allow them to spend as much time as possible with their children, especially in early childhood.

We could speak at length about the policies of my country regarding children and the protection of children. However, following up on what other countries have done, we need to work even harder at all levels to achieve our goals in this field. We will continue to work tirelessly to promote the rights of children, their protection and their well-being.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): It gives me great pleasure to make this statement in this tenth anniversary year of the World Summit for Children. Despite the efforts made by Member States and concerned international organizations to achieve the goals agreed upon at that important gathering, there are still many children exposed to dangers such as recurring regional conflicts and natural disasters, and still more children living in the plight of extreme poverty.

The special session of the General Assembly for the follow-up of the World Summit for Children, to be held in September next year, will provide a very important opportunity to review and strengthen the international endeavour to protect the lives and well-being of children. My Government regards the success of the special session as of paramount importance and hopes that at the special session we shall reach a common understanding about the efforts made by Member States and the international community to maintain and enhance respect for the rights and welfare of children, including the results of past activities and the status of the new and ongoing tasks before us. The Government of Japan also hopes that we will engage in concrete and substantive discussion on how best to carry out these tasks.

One significant step that my Government has taken to protect and promote the rights of children since the World Summit for Children was the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994. Since 1995, Japan has contributed $1 million annually to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme on education for girls. As part of a follow-up effort to the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Japan has committed itself to provide to Africa about 90 billion yen — roughly $857 million — in grant assistance in the areas of education, health care and water supply infrastructure over a five-year period starting in 1999, hoping to provide additional school facilities for 2 million children and to improve the living conditions for at least 15 million people throughout Africa. These are only some of the Japanese Government's efforts to protect and promote the rights and welfare of children internationally, particularly in Africa.

The Japanese Government is now preparing its country report, incorporating all the efforts Japan has made in the context of the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, both of which were adopted at the World Summit for Children.

Since the World Summit for Children, the international community has come to regard the problems of children in armed conflicts and the commercial sexual exploitation of children as matters of great seriousness, inasmuch as they do harm to both the minds and the bodies of children. As a result, there have been serious efforts to address these problems. These efforts led to the adoption by the General Assembly in May this year of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The problem of children in armed conflicts was also addressed in the G-8 Miyazaki Initiative for Conflict Prevention, agreed by the G-8 Foreign Ministers on 13 July 2000. The Initiative has established approaches to be taken by the G-8 regarding war-affected children, including putting pressure on those who involve or target children in armed conflicts, in blatant breach of international standards, and prioritizing assistance for war-affected children in post-conflict reconstruction. As a follow-up to the G-8 Miyazaki Initiatives, Japan will co-host an international workshop and symposium from 19 to 21 November of this year with a focus on the reintegration of child soldiers into society. The workshop is aimed at exchanging lessons learned, to find out the most effective approaches and to promote further coordination among various actors in this field.

With regard to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, my Government is planning to host the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in December 2001 in Yokohama. It is aimed at promoting the implementation of the Agenda for Action to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of children, adopted at the First World Congress. Through such projects Japan will continue to make positive efforts to ensure the success of the special session and to work together with other members of the international community for the promotion of the rights and welfare of children.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea). Ten years have passed since leaders from around the globe gathered at the World Summit for Children and adopted the World Declaration and Plan of Action, which set a variety of goals to be achieved by 2000. A decade has also elapsed since the Convention on the Rights of the Child entered into force. During this period, we have made tangible improvements in the protection and promotion of the rights of children. Governments have come to an agreement that children's rights are universal human rights, making the promotion of these rights a priority in their agenda for policies and legislation. Consequently, children's issues have been given higher priority in virtually all related United Nations conferences and programmes.

As we all know, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the most universal among United Nations human rights instruments. We have also adopted the International Labour Organization Convention to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour and two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: one on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the other on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Through the adoption of these legal instruments, the international community has expressed its strong conviction that, in the twenty-first century, children should be free from all violations of their rights.

Despite the encouraging progress, we still have a long way ahead of us. While increasing importance has been given to children's rights in national policies and legislation, there remain many obstacles to fully implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Declaration and the Plan of Action. In many parts of the world, countless children are still suffering from violations of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Around the world, more than 600 million children live in extreme poverty on less than $1 a day. One hundred and thirty million children in developing countries lack basic education; 1.2 million children live with HIV/AIDS and 13 million have lost their parents due to AIDS. Five hundred and forty million children live in dangerous and unstable situations, such as armed conflicts and humanitarian disasters. Two hundred and fifty million children in developing countries are forced to work, many of them in hazardous and exploitative conditions. The special session next year should be an opportunity to improve such distressing situations.

With regard to the special session, allow me to make a few points that deserve the attention and action of the international community.

First, my delegation believes that the special session should be based above all on the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention recognizes that children are subjects with rights, not objects of charity. However, due to traditional attitudes and their dependent status, many children are still far from enjoying these rights. Admittedly, the rights-based approach may clash with culture and tradition in some areas. However, my delegation believes that the rights of children should be given priority over cultural and traditional singularities.

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to the gap between the *de jure* and de facto rights of children. Enacting laws and making policies is not enough. Despite the existence of related laws and policies, there are many children who cannot enjoy their rights in practice. In order to fully implement such laws and policies, it is essential to strengthen a culture of respect for children's rights. My delegation hopes that the special session will provide its participants with an opportunity to redouble their efforts to achieve this goal.

Thirdly, I would like to mention a particular challenge facing children in the twenty-first century: the challenge of globalization. Globalization has by and large contributed to the advancement of children and the promotion of their rights. However, the uneven distribution of globalization's benefits has driven the wedge between the rich and the poor even deeper, further marginalizing children in developing countries. In this context, the special session should identify concrete measures to allocate more benefits derived from globalization to the children in developing countries. My delegation expects significant contributions from all the relevant United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions in devising these measures.

Last June, during the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, we had the opportunity to conduct a debate on the progress we had achieved in the 1990s and the emerging issues regarding children in the twenty-first century. The conclusion then reached was that an integrated approach to the rights and well-being of children and adolescents based on their life-cycle provides us with a useful framework for building a new strategy for children in the future. We also realized that children and adolescents should be given the opportunity to duly participate in the decision-making process on issues that affect them as well as to play a role in the development of tolerant, peaceful and democratic societies. I hope the outcome document of the special session will effectively reflect these important elements.

In addition, my delegation is of the view that the outcome document should appropriately reflect the differences among regions, where the situation of children varies accordingly. The goal of the special session should be the building of a tailored strategy to meet the specific needs of a region, rather than of a uniform world strategy. In this respect, my delegation places great importance on the active participation of civil society, particularly from developing countries, in the special session as well as in its preparatory process. Civil society has played an essential role in promoting children's rights and welfare. It members are well of the specific needs of children in the region they represent.

Finally, I would like to express the firm commitment of the Republic of Korea to contribute to the success of the special session.

Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka): I consider it a great honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of Sri Lanka under your presidency, Sir, on this important subject.

As I am sure it is in other parts of the world, so also in Sri Lanka our culture has taught us to hold the family unit in sacred esteem, to regard the child as a blessing. This has been so since time immemorial. Over time, the ravages wreaked on human relationships and societies have caused the erosion of family values and the breaking up of the family. There is a distancing of religious institutions from the day-to-day lives of children — religious institutions that for thousands of years had a role in moulding personality and character. There is deterioration in all those relationships and conditions that should surround a child and serve as its protection in its formative years.

It is important that we make what could be called a "comprehensive cultural endeavour" to resuscitate the well-being of families in societies in order that they may serve as units of protection for their children.

The principal purpose of the World Summit for Children in 1990 was the adoption of its Declaration on children. The Declaration sought to give expression to the fundamental belief that every child should be given a better future. A Plan of Action, also adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children, sought to convert that universal appeal into the language of universal commitment and to serve as a guide for governmental, non-governmental, national and international entities in developing their own particular programmes for their own particular needs.

The report of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 expresses the view that the starting point of international development strategies that emphasize equitable human development is quite naturally the rights and well-being of children. It is children whose individual development and social contribution shape the world's future, and it is through children that intergenerational cycles of poverty, exclusion and discrimination can be broken. It was this view that infused the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and inspired the World Summit for Children.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the convening of the World Summit for Children in 1990 and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/93 in 1999, proposing the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001, serve to remind us that all States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child should evaluate their programmes and plans with a view to implementing the principal purpose of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the protection and well-being of the child.

I would like to inform the Assembly that Sri Lanka has established a National Child Protection Authority directly under the supervision of the President of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has formulated a Children's Charter. A National Plan of Action for Children has been adopted in Sri Lanka. The National Child Protection Authority, the Children's Charter and the National Plan of Action for Children together provide a comprehensive perspective within which we have sought in Sri Lanka to provide for the safety and well-being of our children. As part of this national vision, specific aspects of child care are being handled: compulsory education for children between five and fourteen years of age; national programmes to provide for nutrition and immunization; reforms to maintenan laws; and a long-established programme of free a universal health care.

A particularly cruel offence against the innocen of children in Sri Lanka is, of course, their forc recruitment by a terrorist group in Sri Lanka to serve child soldiers. This is a matter on which, on more th one occasion, high authorities of Sri Lanka ha addressed this Assembly.

At the Millennium Summit this year, Sri Lan ratified the Optional Protocol under the Convention the Rights of the Child on the involvement of childr in armed conflict.

With assistance from the United Natio Children's Fund (UNICEF), Sri Lanka is currently the process of preparing a report on the progress ma with regard to the rights of the child during the la decade. The report is expected to be completed by t end of this year.

Sri Lanka commends the overall project-bas approach of UNICEF in dealing with issues pertaini to children. While conventions undoubtedly have the uses, UNICEF has shown how we can go beyo conventions, to projects in the field that attempt recreate the environments — social, religious, cultur and other environments — that are so fundamental f the preservation and the well-being of families a their children.

The South Asian Association for Region Cooperation (SAARC) has addressed in South As such subjects as poverty alleviation, the plight c children and children's education. Progress in thes fields has been uneven from country to countr Nevertheless, I would like the Assembly to know tha the countries of South Asia, under the umbrella o SAARC, as well as individually, endeavour to addres these basic questions relating to the child. The dra texts of two Conventions have been finalized: th Regional Convention on Combating the Crime o Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitutio and the Convention on Regional Arrangements for th Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. When the enter into force, these Conventions could benefi millions in the region.

Therefore, it is our appeal, in the light of th circumstances of children in Sri Lanka, that the specia session on children should give particular attention t

such matters as poverty alleviation, access to adequate education, access to adequate health care and the overall preservation of the family. Sri Lanka looks forward to participating wholeheartedly in the special session of the General Assembly in 2001.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): I am pleased to participate in the discussion of this important issue, which is a priority for my country as well as for the international community. This deliberation is sure to help prepare meticulously for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to follow up the World Summit for Children.

Children are our hope and inspiration. As the ones we most love and care for, who will carry our torch into the future, they deserve the best protection and opportunity we can give them so that they will grow into confident, capable and responsible members of our societies and into enlightened citizens of the planet earth. Unfortunately, they often become pawns, standing helplessly in the line of fire in an unscrupulous political, economic or social endgame on a volatile world chessboard.

The past few years have witnessed many significant advances towards promoting and protecting children's rights. Two landmark achievements have been the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989, and the holding of the World Summit for Children, in 1990. The Convention, its two Optional Protocols and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children provide the most comprehensive framework to date in the promotion of children's rights and welfare. Nepal views the adoption of the International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour as a welcome step. We hope that the Convention will provide effective protection for children from exposure to the worst forms of labour.

Though a good beginning has been made, progress in improving the status of children remains uneven. While developed countries have been able to secure dramatic improvements in the status of their children, developing countries are still entangled in the mire of poverty and other, multifarious problems that impede their efforts to do the same. Most developing countries now have child-specific development programmes and legal frameworks in place. Among them, those with respectable and sustained economic growth have been able to do better than those with slow or no growth. The developing world overall has much catching up to do.

The situation of children in poorer parts of the world remains precarious. Children, as defenceless and vulnerable as they are, have become the principal victims of poverty, inequities and violence. Ill-equipped and ill-prepared to take an increasingly liberal economic onslaught head on, poor countries have been thrown — with their inherent enormous disadvantages — into a globalizing economic arena to fend for themselves. They have lost the traditional economic moorings that closed and import-substitution regimes provided, without getting much benefit from widening global markets. As a result, children in such countries, together with the rest of their compatriots, have suffered enormously from the negative consequences of exclusive globalization.

Children have become easy targets for, and victims of, violence, displacement, sexual abuse, trafficking and economic exploitation. Natural disasters, displacement, wars and conflicts worsen their situation further. Children suffer unspeakable distress in armed conflict and its aftermath. Our hearts bleed when we see children become innocent victims and, worse, perpetrators of violence in conflict situations. Countries that are home to large numbers of refugees know how painful the situation of refugee children becomes.

The sad spectacle of a child in military fatigues toting a gun offers a most horrendous image that deeply hurts our conscience. Many children are sacrificed on the altar of greed, hubris or prejudice, which is often anchored in a difference in culture or ethnic origin. Those who survive carry for the rest of their lives the irreparable physical disability and psychological trauma that conflict leaves in its wake. Girl children, particularly, suffer the ignominy and scars of abuse and violence, which prevent them all their lives from blossoming into emotionally balanced and caring human beings.

The adoption of the Agenda for War-Affected Children at the International Conference on War-Affected Children and armed conflict, held at Winnipeg two months ago, inspires some hope for my delegation. We thank the Government of Canada for hosting that meeting. I am happy to note that the Asia-Pacific

Conference on this issue was held in Kathmandu in May this year. The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict deserves our great appreciation for his continuous efforts to address the issue. But the question remains, how are we going to get non-State actors to comply with the various standards and norms we have evolved?

We have a daunting challenge before us, individually as well as globally. So much needs to be done before every child has food on his or her dinner table, can attend school and has basic health care and potable drinking water.

The level of education and health of parents, as well as the size, economic status and location of the family, are some of the important elements that have significant bearing on children's rights and welfare. Educated parents have the proclivity to send their children to school and to seek health services for them. The situation in cities is generally better than in rural areas, as city dwellers tend to have higher incomes, smaller families and better access to education and health facilities. Children in poverty-stricken rural areas and urban slums are usually worse off. Poor families tend to have a larger family size, for an additional child means an extra source of income in a situation where living amounts to keeping one's soul and body together from one day to the next. A free school-feeding programme, as a source of motivation for the child and of supplemental income for the family, ensures better class attendance, if such a programme can be launched and sustained. Mobile health facilities help wean people away from the clutches of seers and superstition. That millions of children are likely to die of HIV/AIDS in the next few years, particularly in Africa, scares my delegation.

Greater investment in a country in the education, health and other key social sectors in general, and in poorer areas in particular, is obviously an absolutely essential prerequisite for protecting the rights of children and promoting their welfare. But it will work only when child-specific development programmes are backed up by sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Strict legal measures against child abuse and violence are equally necessary to achieve these objectives.

In short, protecting children's rights and promoting their welfare involves a whole range of overarching issues pertaining to nation-building and development. Selective measures alone are not enough to do the trick. Success calls for a clean and accountable Government making sound policies and using scarce resources prudently; it calls for the rule of law and a fair legal and institutional framework; it calls for sustained growth with justice, and sustainable development with environmental protection; it calls for harnessing the ingenuity and enterprise of individuals, the private sector, civil society and communities; and not least, it calls for a favourable external environment, together with compassionate development partners who are ready to help their less privileged partners in their endeavour to achieve the same objectives. The Millennium Declaration rightly sets out what we ought to do for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, which will also serve the cause of children well.

Nepal strongly believes in democracy, the rule of law and the observance of human rights, including the rights of children. Our society is founded on the bedrock of the family as an institution. The family is a cradle of love, care and safety for children. It teaches the virtues of tolerance and interdependence and fosters the values of solidarity and conscientiousness. In the family and in society, children take precedence in opportunities, safety and welfare.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nepal is fully committed to working further to promote and protect children's rights. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal prohibits exploitation of children and protects their rights and benefits. The necessary legal and institutional framework, encompassing most of the Convention provisions, is already in place. A child development action plan which aims at ensuring children's rights and development, including those of handicapped children, disabled street children, child labourers and children in difficult conditions, has been adopted as an integral part of our national development plan.

We recently established an independent national Human Rights Commission and a separate Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare. Similarly, separate juvenile benches have been established in district courts, the lowest tier of our court system.

Despite the best of efforts, however, a poor country like Nepal is constrained in its capacity to suddenly transform its society and hence to transform the status of its children, who constitute nearly half of

our population. An agonizing lack of resources amidst poverty ties our hands.

Therefore, our efforts and capacity alone will not suffice. While we are striving hard to keep our house in order, we will also need substantially enhanced support and assistance from the international community to accelerate our economic development and social progress: more aid, trade concessions and debt relief, among other things.

We view next year's special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children as an important opportunity for the international community to assess the progress made so far, to reflect on where we have gone wrong, leaving us short of meeting the goals set at the World Summit for Children in 1990, and to rededicate ourselves to the cause of our children with greater vigour and commitment. That is the approach that Nepal has been pursuing in its preparations for the special session next year.

Let us face it: there are no easy solutions to the problems we and our children face, especially in our poor countries. Selective intervention with pro-children programmes may by itself be of some help, but not much. We must come up with innovative approaches and fresh outlooks, with children at the centre of all our endeavours. We need to work together and cooperate to harness the kind of development that lifts all boats in the developing world. To succeed, we need to have the requisite political will and to get our priorities right.

Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In 1990, the leaders of the world's countries gathered at the World Summit for Children to formulate a Plan of Action to protect the rights of children and to ensure that children enjoy a happy childhood and a dignified future. Ten years on, in the Millennium Declaration, our leaders reaffirmed their responsibilities towards the world's children, to whom the future belongs. The next important event, on which such great hopes are pinned, will be the 2001 special session of the General Assembly on children.

I wish to take this opportunity to set out the position of Belarus on the most important issues relating to the preparation and holding of the special session, and to express our hope that today's debate will make a positive contribution to the overall preparatory process for the special session.

The 1990 World Summit for Children was the first event to be effective in promoting children's issues. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Summit set out the principles that have guided and inspired us over the past 10 years in our work to improve the situation of children. Among the achievements of the world community is the nearly universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Republic of Belarus can say proudly that it was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention.

The power and relevance of the Convention were confirmed again by the Assembly's adoption in May 2000 of two Optional Protocols to the Convention, which fully rise to the challenges facing today's generation of children and young people.

The Republic of Belarus notes with satisfaction the progress in the preparatory process for the 2001 special session and in the various important concrete measures being taken at the national, regional and international levels. That reflects the universal understanding of the importance of reviving the spirit of the World Summit, which means recognizing the national and international obligations of States and a common commitment to fulfilling those obligations.

Let me refer to just a few of the impressive number of events that have taken place or that are planned in Belarus as part of the preparatory process for the special session. These include a national report, entitled "The position of children in the Republic of Belarus in the year 2000"; preparations for an international symposium, entitled "Human rights and education: problems and prospects"; a national children's forum, entitled "Education for human rights"; and a round table, entitled "Problems of developing children's initiatives and participation in the global movement for children". There are many other events to which I could refer.

Belarus shares the view that one of the goals of the special session should be to renew the objectives of the 1990 World Summit on the basis of the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, bearing in mind the requirements of today's world. We should pay particular attention to the issue of the final outcome document of the special session, which should become a kind of programme of action for children as we look to the future. We agree that this document should be innovative, brief and to the point. However,

it is important to make sure that its scope is broad enough to cover the problems of children in all regions of the world, without exception.

It is important for us to remain aware that our work for children should be structured around three main areas: giving them a good start in life; providing everything they need for a decent education; and ensuring the kind of climate in which they can fully develop their inherent potential as young people. We are convinced that the outcome document must include such issues as the eradication of poverty; the consequences of armed conflict; the vulnerability of children during AIDS epidemics; the provision of universal access for children to education and health care; and the harmful consequences for children of humanitarian disasters, including industrial accidents.

There is less than a year to go before the special session on children. Ultimately, its success will depend to a very great extent on how effectively we use the intervening time. One result of the special session should be the adoption of a renewed world action plan for children that could be an effective instrument through which to promote and defend the rights of children over the decade to come.

Mr. Al-Khal (Qatar) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the State of Qatar on this agenda item, "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children". Given the great importance of this issue at the national, regional and international levels, it is indeed an honour to make this statement.

The World Summit for Children, which took place in New York in September 1990 and was attended by heads of State or Government and high-ranking officials from more than 150 countries, was a historic occasion. It may have served as the precursor to the subsequent attention given to children and children's rights, which placed them at the forefront of our consideration of human rights in general.

The World Summit established various ambitious goals for the 1990s, and set out a Plan of Action which stated that the goals should be achieved by 2000. During its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 54/93, decided to hold a special session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The special session must review the implementation of the programme set out in the Declaration on children and ensure that we are indeed providing protection for children and providing for their development at the highest levels possible.

An invitation has been sent to heads of State or Government to participate in this session, which will take place in September 2001. During the special session we must renew our commitment and consider what action should be taken during the next decade. My delegation takes this opportunity to express our gratitude to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the part that it has played in promoting the welfare of children throughout the world and for the support that it has provided for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Of course, we are also grateful to the Member States that have prepared and implemented their own plans of action.

Millions of children are added every year to the world population. It is indeed regrettable that the majority of them are born into poverty. The situation of the vast majority of children is worse today than at any time in the past. It is therefore essential for the international community to renew its commitment to the goals of the World Summit for Children and to adopt whatever initiatives may be necessary to improve the living standards of hundreds of thousands of children who are growing up in extreme poverty. Our consciences should not allow children to live in suffering and poverty, especially in a world with so much potential and so many resources. The United Nations must make it clear that this situation is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated, neither for this generation of children nor for those of the future.

Among the great challenges that the international community faces today, we could include the need to eliminate the huge gulf between the conditions and the quality of life of children in some countries compared with others. Obviously, the developing countries cannot earmark the kind of resources needed to implement the goals enshrined in the texts of the World Summit for Children, not because they lack the will but because they lack the necessary resources, and because of their increased indebtedness and the lack of resources needed to pay for servicing external debts. Unless we alleviate the debt burden, it is unlikely that these countries will be able to implement their national policies fully and achieve the goals of the Summit in the near future.

The protection of children who are suffering as a result of armed conflict in different parts of the world

is a noble goal; international efforts must be made to stop children from being recruited and exploited in armed conflict. I feel I must stress here what is being done to protect children as a whole and Arab children in particular. My Government calls for granting Arab children the right to life, safety, education and development in the occupied Arab territories.

In order to achieve this we need to put an end to the military operations that are being conducted against civilians and children in Palestine. Children there are falling under the hail of bullets of the occupying forces, in a situation that lacks any moral constraints and where everything is being done to prevent the people of Palestine from living in dignity and peace the way people of other nations do. We all saw the pictures of the brutal killing of the boy Mohamed al-Darra, who was shot down by the bullets of the Israeli forces. This kind of thing is continuing as we sit here talking.

Qatar considers support for the United Nations Committee on Children a matter of primary importance. We also agree that given the extra work that the Committee will have when the two optional protocols to Convention on the Rights of the Child enter into force, the number of experts serving on the Committee should be increased to 18.

The State of Qatar put forward the candidacy of Mrs. Ghalia Mohd bin Hamad Al-Thani for the forthcoming elections. These elections are to take place at the eighth meeting of the States parties of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which will be held in New York in February 2001. We propose her to serve on the Committee, given her great competence in the area of child protection. It would give an extra impetus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child to have such a new member.

My Government is fully convinced of the need to allow all children to enjoy their legitimate rights. We signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 on 8 December 1992, and ratified it on 3 April 1995. Our Government intends to implement all the objectives of this Convention and will undertake all necessary measures to guarantee the economic, social and educational rights of children and their leisure and cultural activities without any discrimination. The State of Qatar has no laws that allow any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, language or any other factor that might prevent children from enjoying their rights.

The principle laid down in article 3 of the Convention, which states that providing services to children should be a priority for the States parties, is enshrined in the State of Qatar's basic statute, which is our constitution. Article 7 of Qatar's statute states that the family is the basis of our society. This law provides the necessary protection for the family and establishes that children and the younger generation must be protected from everything that might harm them or deprive them of their rights. To achieve this the State has adopted new legislation and new measures to defend children and their rights. These actions include the establishment of a high council for family matters that provides the basis for a healthy society, as ordained by the constitution of Qatar.

The constitution also guarantees free education at all levels. The Education Ministry has made it clear that every educational institution at whatever level must have a library with thousands of books as well as new and old journals. In fact, school magazines and magazines written by school children are a good way for children to express their views. To this end the Ministry has special cultural and knowledge competitions for children. We also recently had direct and free elections throughout the educational system in order to encourage students to enjoy and use their democratic rights and express their points of view in complete freedom via schools' councils, the representatives of which are elected by the students themselves.

As far as health is concerned, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the protection of children's health. This ministry makes sure that we are raising a healthy generation of young people protected from anything that might affect their health — especially from contagious diseases that kill so many children.

To sum up, even though it is established that primary responsibility for international commitments rests on the shoulders of national Governments, it is important that we state clearly how important the United Nations and the entire international community are to this work. The United Nations is an irreplaceable lead organization for mobilizing our resources and the national resources of poorer countries. This is why we hope that the next special session will provide a good opportunity for re-establishing our commitment and for adopting a new international plan of action to pursue the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular to safeguard future

generations — in other words, the future of our children.

Qatar will work alongside other States to guarantee the success of this special session and to make sure that we achieve our goals in the priority area of taking care of our children.

Mr. Aguzzi-Durán (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled the "State of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children", which is contained in document A/55/429. We would also like to thank the Preparatory Committee for the special session for its report, which is contained in document A/55/43, parts I and II.

For our Government the theme of children is a priority. A large part of the social policies in the areas of education, health and nutrition are focused on the boys and girls of our country. We in Venezuela have given ourselves a new constitution that devotes one of its first sections to the duties, human rights and guarantees provided to individuals. The Constitution also enshrines gender equality as it embraces the principle of equality and non-discrimination. In Venezuela there is equitable treatment for girls and boys.

Furthermore, we are making far-reaching, decisive progress in the process of adapting our legislation to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, it is particularly worth noting the adoption of the basic law for the protection of children and adolescents, which came into force on 1 April 2000. We have given it the status of basic law because it contains programmatic, substantive and procedural standards, principles and provisions that must be met by other laws in this connection. Furthermore, this law takes preference over other laws and contains provisions that repeal standards contained in previous basic laws in our country.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has considered this law one of the most advanced pieces of legislation in the area of the human rights of children in the American continent. The law acknowledges that full respect for children's rights must be guaranteed, and that they are not wards of the State. By this, we mean that they are capable of demanding, acting and proposing. We acknowledge that the child is thus a person in development, with the rights and responsibilities inherent to all human beings. In addition to acknowledging and defining their rights, the law provides effective ways to ensure them.

As of the entry into force of this law, we have begun to establish the institutions that, according to the same text, will be in charge of seeing to the fulfilment of the individual and collective rights of children and adolescents in Venezuela, with no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, age, language, thought, conscience, religion, beliefs, culture, political or other opinion, economic position, social, ethnic or national origin, disability, disease, conditions of birth or any other condition of the child or adolescent, their parents, representatives or responsible family members. With this law, Venezuela is honouring its international commitments and is adapting its domestic legislation to the principles and standards contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide comprehensive protection for them, both socially and legally.

The aforementioned law also provides for the creation of the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents as a public, deliberative, consultative, monitoring entity, with its own legal standing, autonomous in discharging its functions, and with responsibility for ensuring respect for the rights of children and adolescents. It is the ultimate authority in the protection system.

As in any process, this one has stages, and we have concluded the first one, perhaps the easiest one. We are going into a new stage with the creation of the national, regional and local institutions in charge of ensuring the exercise of rights and of institutionalizing, reporting, disseminating and promoting the principles and standards established in the new law. The aim is that people will know what those rights are and what the duties and responsibilities of the State, the family and the community are. The Government of Venezuela has made a commitment to remain firm in the fulfilment and enforcement of this legislation, because it establishes as a basic principle the co-responsibility of the Venezuelan State and society in defending the rights of children and adolescents.

Venezuela has repeatedly supported regional and international initiatives and projects in favour of children. Our active participation in this field is no more than a reflection of that commitment; therefore,

we have co-sponsored draft resolution A/55/L.34, which will shortly be presented by Ambassador Patricia Durrant. From this rostrum, we wish to take the opportunity to recognize the Permanent Representative of Jamaica and the other officers of the Preparatory Committee for their dedication and unflagging efforts to ensure the success of the General Assembly's special session in 2001 to which Venezuela assigns high priority. Venezuela will cooperate resolutely to ensure the result we are all hoping for. We also recognize the tenacious efforts made for children in need throughout the world by UNICEF and its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): My delegation feels greatly strengthened and inspired by the strides that the United Nations is making on the rights of children. It is a triumph of this era that we have been able to expound children's human rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a milestone instrument, one which my country, Fiji, has embraced fully; we are discharging our requisite responsibilities thereunder despite resource and other constraints.

The political will to effect positive attitudinal change is evidenced in the accomplishments made to date by the Coordinating Committee on children. This cross-sectoral and interdepartmental body of governmental and non-governmental organizations submitted Fiji's initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and continues to monitor the domestic application of the Convention, despite its lack of a formal budget component and of a permanent secretariat.

The convening of a special session on children is greatly appreciated by my Government, and we hope that its outcome will bring about greater awareness of the plight of children in the global context and provide solutions for the well-being of both present and future generations.

There are two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the participation of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Although these issues are not immediate problems to a great extent in Fiji, they remain equally important in our continuing commitment to children's rights.

The outcome of the special session needs to be action-oriented and innovative. It should aim to position children and children's human rights alongside all fundamental human rights. To achieve this outcome, it is critical to define a meaningful process for the participation of children in the preparatory meeting and in the special session itself. We also hope to overcome obstacles in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through this process. Clearly, the modality that will ensure the optimum participation of children needs to be defined. The modality should consist of guidelines and procedures for non-State parties to participate with observer status.

Fiji is optimistic that we can find an amicable process that would accommodate the sensitivities of Member States and, more importantly, give voice to the children to directly inform the special session of the General Assembly. In particular, as we search for global peace, and as we are deliberating on a culture of peace in this Assembly, the special session presents the ideal opportunity to build this principle into the culture of human rights, in which the rights of children constitute an innovative dimension.

Fiji stands ready to contribute to the preparation and successful convening of the special session, and we urge all Member States to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.34 by consensus.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, to be held here in New York in September next year. We deeply appreciate the United Nations efforts in placing the well-being, protection and rights of children at the core of its concern since its inception in 1945, with the first standard-setting Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. This Declaration affirms the right of children to special protection, opportunities and facilities for a healthy, normal development.

Today, the world's obligation towards children is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989, thus ensuring that the support and protection of children are the responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States worldwide. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has extended great efforts to ensure that children lead safe, healthy and productive lives, while other United Nations agencies — such as the International Labour

Organizationn, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — and the various Special Representatives have also played their part in the protection and promotion of children's well-being.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is sad to note that, since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children held here in New York in 1990, tens of million of children around the world remain victims of war, poverty, abuse and exploitation. In view of this grave situation, it is urgent that the international community make an assessment of developments since then and formulate future actions and priorities to protect the well-being of children, with the aim of achieving significant human development gains within one generation.

In the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, he states, inter alia, that

> "children have increasingly been victimized as both the targets and the perpetrators of violence". *(A/55/163, para. 2)*

Children make up almost half of the world's 21 million refugees and another 13 million children are estimated to be internally displaced. UNICEF data are also grim, indicating that 2 million children were killed in armed conflicts in the 10 years between 1986 and 1996, while another 6 million were injured, 10 million traumatized and 1 million orphaned. The report incorporated several recommendations that must be addressed, particularly those that could deter the exploitation of children in armed conflict and those to promote the building of a culture of prevention.

Malaysia is deeply concerned by the plight of these children affected by armed conflict and believes that their special needs must be taken into consideration, particularly their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration. My delegation calls on all Member States to make every effort to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict and to give children their due right to enjoy a normal childhood.

Another area of concern to my delegation is the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which are quite rampant around the world. My delegation deplores these activities, which international community must also address these issues and find solutions to them.

The report entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", contained in document A/AC.256/3, has highlighted some progress made in the last decade that has improved the lot of children in the world. Since the welfare of women is linked to that of children, the advances made in the promotion and protection of the rights of women have benefited children as well. In this regard, my delegation is heartened to note that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has significantly advanced the rights of women, which in turn has also positively impacted on children.

My delegation is also of the view that poverty is still a major hindrance to social and human development in many developing countries, where children are the hardest hit by poverty. It is imperative that development programmes emphasize the rights and well-being of children, as their development will contribute to the shaping of the future. Efforts must be made to ensure that children are given proper nourishment and health care to avoid malnutrition and disease, as well as access to basic education.

Malaysia has incorporated the promotion and protection of the rights of children into our national policies, namely, the National Welfare Policy, the Family Policy within the National Population Policy, the National Policy on Women, the National Development Plans and the New Economic Policy. The National Welfare Policy emphasizes the importance of the family in nation-building, while the Family Policy includes programmes for the survival, protection and development of children. The National Policy on Women highlighted issues on children: child abuse, child labour, child care, abandoned children, missing children and gender preferences. The Five-Year Malaysia Development Plan aims at stimulating economic growth, developing human resources and enhancing the quality of life of Malaysians, including children. Our New Economic Policy includes measures introduced to provide opportunities and affirmative action for the children of disadvantaged groups through the building of residential schools, textbook loan schemes, financial aid and the management of

To ensure a positive future for the children, we must give them a good start in life so that they can be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn. They must also be given the opportunity to complete a good-quality basic education. These opportunities will enable them to participate in and contribute to their society. We look forward to the preparatory work for the special session on children and Malaysia will participate actively in them to ensure the success of the session.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): It is an honour to speak today on behalf of the Israeli delegation on this important agenda item. The survival, protection and development of the children of the world is an issue of great significance and one which has concerned the General Assembly and other United Nations organs for many years.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989 was a milestone in the crusade for children's rights, creating a viable legal and ethical mechanism with which to promote and protect the rights of children. Since then, various resolutions and declarations have been issued which have augmented that Convention. Indeed, today, as we consider the resolution on the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, we rededicate ourselves to the further development of this issue and the continued pursuit of our goal to protect the children of the world.

In her speech last year before the General Assembly marking the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Executive Director Carol Bellamy of the United Nations Children's Fund cited well-known and immensely disturbing statistics that gravely illustrate the plight of children in less developed areas of the world. Despite the unprecedented wealth of our globe, nearly 32,000 children under the age of five die each day of preventable causes, totalling nearly 12 million deaths each year. These are numbers that should mobilize every Member State in an age in which we possess unparalleled ability to prevent disease, malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, violence and exploitation.

Today, this Assembly is renewing its commitment to consider and pursue future action on behalf of children in the coming decade. Israel wholeheartedly supports the initiative to convene a special session of the General Assembly on children, sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund, to review progress achieved since the World Summit for Children and to encourage appropriate actions in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly.

In this regard, I would like to comment on various developments that have taken place in Israel in recent years affecting the rights of the child.

In a landmark decision of October 1999, the Supreme Court of Israel, setting a precedent both nationally and internationally, imposed tort damages on a parent who neglected the children in his care by completely estranging himself from them and inflicting severe emotional damage. Although the circumstances were extreme, this decision is indicative of the special sensitivity accorded to children's rights in my country.

In another landmark ruling in January of this year, the Israeli Supreme Court condemned, in absolute terms, the resort to the corporal punishment of children as a method of discipline and child raising. This ruling is indicative of the growing awareness in Israel of the appalling phenomena of child abuse and violence. It further serves as a warning that such patterns of misconduct are not only immoral and repugnant, but are also unlawful in our society. It sends a clear message that the use of force against children is a gross degradation of their human dignity and is an infringement on the child's physical integrity and mental health.

This ruling marks a milestone in Israel's long-standing campaign against domestic violence in general and child abuse in particular. It follows an earlier ruling of the Supreme Court that prohibited the use of physical punishment by teachers and other caregivers. Following Israel's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the adoption of the Israeli Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty ensured that the rights of the child are endowed with constitutional protection. There has been a significant and steady rise in the number of domestic judicial decisions grounded on the rationale underlying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, voicing and echoing children's perspectives and their right to human dignity, advancing their rights and setting harsher penalties for unlawful treatment of children. In this respect it should be noted that, even prior to the Court's recent ruling, our penal law imposed criminal liability on parents

In addition to these specific changes, comprehensive reform is underway in Israel in the realm of children's rights. In 1997 a special committee was appointed to review existing legislation in this field in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to recommend appropriate revisions. In addition, a recent bill passed by the Israeli Parliament establishes commissions on the status of the child in every municipality, with child representatives sitting on their boards. In addition, we are now in the process of planning educational campaigns in the media and in schools to increase sensitivity to children's rights and to raise public awareness.

Yet despite all this, great hurdles lay ahead, both in Israel and in the world at large. Anachronistic social and traditional norms are still evident in many societies, and the practice of beating children remains widespread. We believe that the way in which a society treats children and other vulnerable groups is, to a great extent, a mirror of its values. Let us endeavour then to build on the progress of the last decade and to take steps that will ensure that the values of the international community are consistent with our objectives on behalf of children. These efforts must continue without respite until that day when every single child is guaranteed the chance to grow in good health, with adequate nutrition and education, and in an environment of peace and security.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): As the year 2000 draws to the end, we are approaching the special session of the General Assembly on children. This important global event, as we are all aware, has been designed and oriented to review the progress achieved and recommend the best practices to overcome obstacles encountered in achieving the goals set by the World Summit in 1990. Fortunately, the special session of the General Assembly on children is being convened at a time when the international community has the valuable asset of practical experience derived from numerous review processes on the world conferences held in the 1990s.

We should also remind ourselves that one of the great strengths of this process compared with others is that the world has been able — going beyond the current North-South political and ideological debate — to virtually arrive at a consensus on an instrument or [illegible] protect children worldwide. The international community should seize this highly unique opportunity to act vigorously and in absolute terms to realize the already defined goals in this domain.

For the special session to become a success, the international community ought to address numerous challenges still remaining in the path ahead.

First, ten years have passed since the World Summit convened by the General Assembly in 1990. The international community has witnessed drastic changes and developments in this period. The vision, strategy and goals adopted by the World Summit need to be reviewed with a view to their updating in accordance with the current framework, agreed at the international level, as to the priorities and areas to which the United Nations and Member States should devote their resources. This challenge has rightly been addressed by the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee in paragraph five of her summary (*A/55/43, Annex I, para.5*) and was referred to again in the panel discussion on the review and assessment process. Protection of children in times of war or armed conflict, especially children in territories under occupation, needs to be qualitatively targeted and given prominence in the review process. Poverty and the sexual abuse of children are also of immense importance and should find their way into the deliberations of the upcoming special session. What matters most in the context of updating the goals of the World Summit is the observance of and full attention to the principles of equality and non-selectivity in reviewing the themes and situations in which children are most vulnerable.

Secondly, globalization is a two-sided phenomenon. The mixed effects and impacts of globalization were also vividly seen among children. While globalization has been a driving force for the enhancement of cooperation and convergence at the global level, it has at the same time generated profound exclusionary and negative consequences for children. The special session should take measures to ensure that the dynamism of globalization is fully exploited to counteract negative impacts such as the sexual exploitation of children and the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as to fight vigorously against these manifestations. On the question of sexual exploitation, it should be remembered that increasing poverty and underdevelopment, as well as the divers[illegible] of free

market, including through the globalized media and information services, have essentially contributed to the persistence of this evil phenomenon.

The international community must act to shape operational strategies to ensure that the gains of globalization are evenly distributed for all peoples and individuals, especially women and children. Children in the urban and rural areas of all regions must benefit from the advantages of globalization.

Thirdly, developing indicators and building capacities and infrastructures at the national level to respond effectively to the current needs for the protection of children is highly significant in the process of the end-of-decade review. Areas such as social services, poverty, legal deficiencies, education and health are the pillars of a sound and comprehensive reform policy at the national level. At the international level, creating a just and favourable international environment is the essential factor for the success of domestic policies geared to the protection of children. Factors such as sufficient resources, removal of debt burdens and the adoption of sound and just policies by the Bretton Woods institutions play a key role in assisting Governments to respond to domestic challenges.

Fourthly, strengthening the institution of the family and family bonds is one of the most effective ways to protect children from numerous threats facing them in different societies. The family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural unit for the growth and well-being of all its members, particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within communities. The family will raise the children in an environment of happiness, love and understanding that will certainly prevent them from breaking away from their primary shelter and their exposure to sexual and other forms of exploitation. The special session should, in our view, give prominence to this important issue.

There have been many conferences and seminars held at the national and regional levels on the protection of children throughout the world. The end-of-decade reviews to be submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are being prepared at the national levels. The upcoming special session and its preparatory experiences of all the participants in general, and of those that have made considerable accomplishments and gains in their countries in particular. The experiences gained by Governments through hard and complex processes are valuable assets on the basis of which the international community should develop best practices in the best interests of children.

While discussing the key issues of the special session, I am duty-bound to highlight the situation of Palestinian children in the occupied territories. Today all mankind is witnessing the struggle of the Palestinian people, especially the children, to liberate their land from the occupying force. Every day we see on the television screens images of horrendous atrocities. Palestinian children are being shot to death from the air and with automatic machine guns and tanks. They only seem, at most, to be throwing rocks at those who have occupied their land and homes and have oppressed and savagely humiliated them for decades. The children of Palestine have not only been robbed of their childhood, but they have also been victimized in the most violent manner by the occupying force, in total violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We cannot and shall not remain indifferent to this inhumane travesty of justice. Whether or not we rise to this challenge, Palestinian children will emerge victorious. But, as members of the international community, we should seriously reconsider the limit of our capacity to accept the price in lives, blood and misery that Palestinian children must pay for the victory which they deserve.

Since the atrocities against children under occupation remains a crucial issue, it is our firm conviction that consideration of this issue and the need to protect the children under occupation must find its way into the agenda currently being outlined by the Preparatory Committee for consideration at the forthcoming special session.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.34.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): In my capacity as Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for Follow-up to the World Summit for Children, I wish through you, Sir, to thank the President of the General

on this agenda item. We know that he represented his country, Finland, at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and that he has been instrumental in raising political awareness among world leaders of the importance of making issues related to children central to global efforts to reduce poverty and enhance social progress. My thanks also go to all the delegations that have participated in the debate on this item, and for their kind words addressed to the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee.

Before introducing the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.34, I wish to ask Member States to note the following revisions to its text. First, in operative paragraph 7 the words "the invitation" should be inserted after "reiterates" in the second line of the English text, so that the paragraph reads:

> "*Welcomes* the assignment by heads of State and Government of personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee and reiterates the invitation to heads of State and Government who have not assigned personal representatives to consider doing so."

Secondly, in operative paragraph 14 the title of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should be changed to read:

> "Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children",

That coincides with the mandate given in resolution 51/77.

I have been informed that there is no quorum present, and that therefore the text of the new paragraph, which has been circulated in the Hall, will be introduced at a later date, when action is to be taken on the draft resolution.

I now have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Preparations for the special session on children", contained in document A/55/L.34, as orally revised. In addition to the sponsors listed in the draft resolution, the following countries have joined as co-sponsors: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Guinea, Haiti, Iceland, [illegible] Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, M[illegible] Malta, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Mozambiq[illegible] Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, the Netherlands, N[illegible] Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Pe[illegible] Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic [illegible] Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Luc[illegible] San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spa[illegible] Sudan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedon[illegible] Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, [illegible] United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzan[illegible] Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The draft resolution inter alia reaffirms [illegible] commitments made by heads of State and Governm[illegible] at the World Summit for Children, held in New York, September 1990. It also reaffirms that the spec[illegible] session, while reviewing the achievements in [illegible] implementation and results of the World Declaration [illegible] the Survival, Protection and Development of Child[illegible] and the Plan of Action for implementing the Wo[illegible] Declaration, will undertake a renewed commitment a[illegible] consider future action for children in the next decade.

The draft resolution stresses that [illegible] implementation of the Convention on the Rights of [illegible] Child contributes to the achievement of the goals of [illegible] World Summit for Children, and recommends that [illegible] thorough assessment of the 10 years of implementati[illegible] of the Convention be an essential element in [illegible] preparations for the special session.

The draft resolution further welcomes [illegible] initiatives and actions undertaken by Governments a[illegible] relevant organizations, in particular the United Natio[illegible] Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as by regional a[illegible] subregional organizations, to review the progr[illegible] achieved since the World Summit for Children, a[illegible] encourages appropriate national, regional a[illegible] international preparatory initiatives, with a view [illegible] contributing to the preparations for the special sess[illegible] and to building partnerships for and with children.

The draft resolution takes note of the reports a[illegible] the decisions of the Preparatory Committee, a[illegible] requests the Secretary-General to submit to the spec[illegible] session, through the Preparatory Committee, a revie[illegible] of the implementation and results of the Wo[illegible] Declaration and Plan of Action, and to ma[illegible] recommendations for further action, elaborating on t[illegible] best practices noted and on obstacles encountered [illegible] the implementation, as well as on measures [illegible] overcome those obstacles.

The draft resolution renews the invitation to heads of State or Government to participate in the special session, and encourages those heads of State or Government who have not yet assigned personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee to consider doing so. It highlights the important role of children and young people and encourages States to facilitate and promote their active contribution to the preparatory process and to the special session.

By the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to convene two substantive sessions of the Preparatory Committee during 2001, and sets the dates for the special session for 19 to 21 September 2001.

The draft resolution expresses appreciation to those Governments which have made financial contributions to the trust fund established for the least developed countries, and towards the preparatory activities undertaken by UNICEF as the substantive secretariat of the special session, and encourages Governments which have not yet contributed to do so.

Finally, the draft resolution decides to include on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly an item entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children".

Before concluding, I wish to thank all delegations, the Executive Director and the staff of UNICEF, as well as the United Nations Secretariat for the tremendous cooperation which the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee have thus far received during the preparatory process. My special thanks go to Ambassador Hanns Schumacher of Germany who, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Preparatory Committee, led the informal consultations on this draft resolution. We believe that the draft resolution, when adopted by the General Assembly, will provide a solid basis for the future work of the Preparatory Committee and for the special session.

My delegation hopes that this draft resolution, as orally revised, will be adopted by consensus, thus reaffirming the firm commitment of the international community to giving every child a better future.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken at the sixty-second plenary meeting, this morning, I call on the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): In the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the Holy See appreciates the opportunity to add its voice to those that express the same concerns for today's children and young people.

> "Despite the technological progress, children still suffer and die from the lack of basic nourishment or as victims of violence and armed conflicts that they do not even understand. Others are victims of emotional neglect. There are people who poison the minds of the young by passing on to them prejudices and empty ideologies. And today, children are exploited even to the point of being used to satisfy the lowest depravities of adults."

These are not new words, but unfortunately they are just as valid and just as necessary. These are the words that Pope Paul VI addressed to Henry Labouisse, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in 1978, 22 years ago.

This past April, the Commission on Human Rights expressed its concern that the situation of children in many parts of the world remained critical as a result of poverty, inadequate social and economic conditions in an increasingly globalized world economy, pandemics, natural disasters, armed conflicts, displacement, exploitation, illiteracy, hunger, intolerance, disability and inadequate legal protection.

Those issues concerning children, which have demanded the attention of the world for so many years, continue to be the centre of our attention. The recently adopted Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are evidence of that concern. The Holy See, as one of the first signatories of the Convention, is happy to note that it has also signed these two important Protocols, which add to the strength of resolve that the world directs towards the protection of children.

In recent years, the United Nations has been aided by the activities of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to focus on the needs and challenges that children continue to face. The United Nations has also welcomed the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning child labour. These efforts, along with the ongoing attention of the Offices of the United Nations High

and the United Nations agencies, especially UNICEF, continue to work towards the fullest implementation of the Convention and the provisions of the Summit.

The Catholic Church has always recognized that children are the most precious and, at the same time, the most vulnerable members of the human family and in need of the greatest protection. The Holy See was an active participant in the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the World Summit and, as a Permanent Observer, it participates with special interest in any discussion involving children at the United Nations. The Holy See looks forward to the preparatory work that the offices and agencies that I have mentioned bring to the special session, and is confident that their involvement will greatly help focus the discussions and deliberations that will lead to the fruitful conclusion of the session.

Having applauded the convening of the World Summit for Children, the Holy See looks forward to the upcoming special session as an important event at which the family of nations might once again come together to recommit itself to a greater understanding of the means to address the safeguarding of the well-being and the protection of life and rights of the world's children.

My delegation hopes that the discussions at the upcoming preparatory meetings will centre especially on how to bring peace to situations of armed conflict and violence, end hunger, protect the family, strengthen education, stop discrimination, provide better health care, build stability and maintain security.

At the same time, my delegation also sees the need to recall that the rights of children depend on parents, the family and the entire world community. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms can come only from recognition of and respect for the human dignity shared by each and every person.

It is the hope of the Holy See that the discussions throughout the United Nations system will centre around ways to move forward, rather than simply languish on issues that are never resolved. May the upcoming special session be a concrete step towards achieving this goal.

The Acting President: I call on the observer of Switzerland, in accordance with the decision taken at the sixty-second plenary meeting this morning.

Ms. Waldvogel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Just 10 years ago attention focused on the rights of the child was intensified by the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the Declaration and the Plan of Action at the World Summit, held here in New York. On that occasion, the participating States identified several priority areas and defined specific objectives to improve the situation of children, objectives thought to be attainable by 2000. However, during the decade there were important developments, at times positive, but too often negative, which had a major impact on the situation of children. While we keep the Declaration and the Plan of Action as a framework for analysis, these new facts should be incorporated into the evaluation that we are preparing to undertake at the special session in 2001.

In this respect, Switzerland would like to refer to four points that we believe must be included in the evaluation of the past decade.

First, the assessment of the situation of children should be based on a legal approach, particularly on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the other international instruments for the protection and the promotion of the rights of the child. Since it refers to an approved international normative framework, a legal approach would allow for a more accurate and systematic joint assessment of the areas in which progress must still be made.

In this context, it will be necessary to consider the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning States' respect for and implementation of the Convention, as well as other mechanisms — universal or regional — to monitor respect for the rights of the child. We think, for example, of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict or of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, particularly the Optional Protocols of the Convention. We take this opportunity to encourage States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify these instruments, if possible without reservations, particularly the Optional Protocols of the Convention.

Secondly, Switzerland believes that the backbone of the methodology can be an approach based on an analysis of the circumstances and causes of lack of

respect for the rights of the child only if it is set within the more general framework of development, in order to identify all the factors having an effect on children, their development and the enjoyment of their rights. Among those factors we would mention human rights, socio-economic development, demography, equality between men and women and democracy.

The third aspect we want to mention relates to the report (A/AC.256/3) of the Secretary-General entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", presented at the last meeting of the Preparatory Committee. That report identified future challenges and problems to which we must give our full attention and specifically integrate into the evaluation of progress made over the last decade. Among those challenges, my delegation would emphasize the prevalence of violence against children — whether State, institutional or private violence; violations of the rights of the child during armed conflict; the acute problem of the exploitation of children, whether economic, sexual or in some other form, which is affecting increasing numbers of children; and the disastrous impact, whether direct or indirect, long-term or short-term, of HIV/AIDS on children.

In both its national and foreign policy, Switzerland is committed to ensuring that all these violations and injustices are ended. Among other things, our bilateral humanitarian assistance has increased its activities with regard to children who are victims of armed conflict, and on the multilateral front we actively support various international organizations. We also hope to strengthen and increase our efforts on behalf of the rights of the child at the special session and in the preparatory process, in collaboration with all the other States and actors concerned.

Finally, a fourth important development that has taken place since the World Summit for Children in 1990 has to do with the recognition that it is necessary to give children and young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making when it concerns them. Indeed, article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that it is our obligation to ensure that children are consulted both at the national and international level when decisions are taken that concern them as individuals with specific rights and duties and as active members of the family unit and of the community. In that regard, Switzerland is committed to encourage and facilitate the participation of children in the various meetings to be held before the special session and during the special session itself. We encourage other States to join in these efforts.

We hope that the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 will be an opportunity to mobilize all the actors concerned — States, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, young people and children, and the private sector. That mobilization could only increase the importance of the event and give greater legitimacy to its results. Switzerland hopes that those results will be in the form of recommendations to ensure better respect for the rights of the child throughout the world, and the adoption of a long-term strategy and a set of specific actions to guarantee that respect.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. As indicated by the representative of Jamaica, action on draft resolution A/55/L.34, as orally revised, will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.